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ABSTRACT

The argument is advanced that tertiary education in Australia, which comprises three sectors--universities, colleges of advanced education, and colleges of technical and further education--is hierarchically structured. Although the colleges were proposed to be of comparable status to universities, the new colleges of advanced education, which have strong vocational emphasis, have generally lesser standing academically, socially, and in terms of physical facilities. While the college sector experienced dramatic growth in the expansionary period of the 1960s and early 1970s, greater attention will need to be given to the structural relations of the tertiary education sectors in the current period of contraction, to avoid duplication and problems of social discrimination. Although under the Australian constitution control of education rests with the state government, the commonwealth has been able to control the extent and nature of higher education, particularly since 1974, when it assumed full financial responsibility for funding universities and colleges of advanced education. The extent of commonwealth power over the institutions is examined and some broader impacts of centralized control are noted. (Author/PHR)

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A Review of the Structure and Control of Tertiary Education Down Under

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Like all western societies higher education in Australia is in a situation of transition and uncertainty. During the period of growth extending from the early sixties to the mid-seventies, the student population in higher education increased rapidly, the product of an increase in the number of students eligible to enter higher education created by the post war baby boom, the heavy migrant inflow that occurred in the fifties, and the increase in participation rates, particularly of females, in higher education.[1]

TABLE 1

RETENTION RATES TO FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLING
AUSTRALIA: 1967 to 1977

Year	Males per cent	Females per cent	Persons per cent
1967	26.5	18.7	22.7
1970	33.0	25.5	29.3
1971	34.1	26.9	30.6
1972	35.7	28.9	32.4
1973	35.2	30.8	33.1
1974	34.1	31.6	32.8
1975	34.6	33.6	34.1
1976	34.6	35.3	34.9
1977	34.0	36.6	35.3

Australia is now approaching zero population growth, the migration program is failing to attract substantial numbers of new settlers, participation rates of youth in higher education have now leveled, and coordinating authorities at the State and Commonwealth levels are reviewing the offerings and organization of higher educational institutions.

Some argue that the response to the emerging situation will not be determined by the institutions themselves, but by government action. Decisions will be taken in the political arena. In any case, the response will have to be within the context of the existing structure of tertiary education, the nature and direction of public control, and the future level and pattern of demand for tertiary education. It is these problems that this paper addresses. To the administrators of North America, many similarities with their own experience will become evident as the paper progresses.

1. The Structure of Higher Education Down Under

Australia has a hierarchical structure of tertiary education consisting of universities, colleges of advanced education and colleges of technical and further education. The enrollment numbers in these institutions in Australia in 1977 are shown in Table 2.[2]

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION BY TYPE OF ENROLLMENT FOR EACH SECTOR: 1977

	Full-time	Part-time		Total
		Internal	External	
Universities	102 901	45 827	9 683	158 411
Colleges of advanced education	84 894	44 666	10 752	140 312
TAFE Instns	40 696	710 899	57 699	809 294

Higher education in Australia was influenced by two major reports - the Murray Report[3] of 1957, which recommended an injection of funds into the university sector, and the Martin Report[4] of 1964-65, which recommended the development of institutions which would be of tertiary

status, but with greater vocational emphasis and more liberal entry requirements than the universities. The Martin Report contended that the universities were too restrictive in their education, preventing the development of the latent abilities of many young Australians. The College of Advanced Education system was established as a result of the Martin Report with the objectives of:

- o providing a range of vocationally oriented courses to serve the perceived needs of industry at the undergraduate level,
- o providing for students who, by choice, or the absence of an appropriate academic background, did not gain entry to a university, but who could proceed to a more vocationally oriented qualification.
- o recruiting staff with a commitment to teaching rather than to research and scholarship and who had practiced their profession.

Some 82 new tertiary institutions were established. Many were developed by upgrading existing institutions or by separating higher level programs in technical colleges and offering these within a new structure. A diverse grouping of colleges emerged, in terms of size, function, and objectives. Today the colleges of advanced education include:

- o Single purpose teachers colleges
- o Agricultural colleges
- o Paramedical colleges
- o Creative arts colleges
- o Multipurpose technological institutions
- o Regional multipurpose colleges

Colleges of advanced education do not generally hold, in the eyes of many of the public, the same status as universities. The former Universities Commission in fact argued that, in terms of status and prestige, the colleges were institutions in which less able students

enrolled, and which would accept the overflow from the universities. The lower status of the colleges was accentuated also by the poorer physical facilities available to students and the lower pay of academic staff.[5]

Although there are exceptions, the different levels of status remain reflected in salary differentials and the degree of public control exercised over the two sectors. It is clear from a number of surveys that in comparison to universities:

1. The parents of college students have generally received less formal education.
2. A greater proportion of the parents of college students is in low grade white collar and blue collar, rather than professional or managerial jobs.
3. A higher percentage of the students is enrolled on a part-time basis which reflects social origin.
4. Many students admitted to colleges would not have the minimum academic qualifications to gain entry to most universities.
5. A smaller proportion of college students proceeds to higher degrees.

The colleges are different from universities in terms of the type of courses they offer. Many of the college courses are aimed at a lower level and are shorter than an undergraduate university degree course and have a strong vocational rather than disciplinary emphasis. Official statements on the differences between colleges and universities emphasize this vocational distinction (see Appendix 1 and 2). But the distinction is in many respects artificial. While the colleges do pursue unashamedly a vocational orientation, so do the universities. The real distinction between the two sectors is not so much based upon vocationalism but on a social function which is reflected in academic prestige. As a result of their attracting a greater proportion of the most qualified

entrants, and those from higher social classes, the universities prepare students for occupations with higher social status. For example, the universities prepare medical practioners, but the colleges prepare the paramedics.

A distinction also exists with respect to the emphasis given to teaching and research. The colleges give emphasis to teaching and most deny research opportunity to staff. Such a policy assumes that there is a fixed body of knowledge which must be transmitted by college teachers to people who are trained to manipulate resources by established processes. On the other hand, the universities give an equal emphasis to teaching and research. The assumption about the role of colleges does not appear to rest upon any rationale of the nature of teaching but on notions concerning the abilities of college students and their perceived functions in society.

The differentiation in Australian tertiary education is accentuated when the third sector is considered, namely the colleges of technical and further education. These colleges cater for students with a practical bent, offering courses at the craft and technician levels. They admit students who have not completed a high school education. They are not corporate institutions - they are under the direct administrative control of state departments. Teaching staff are paid considerably less than lecturers in colleges of advanced education and the vast majority of students study on a part-time, evening basis.

In general it can be demonstrated that the development of this diversity of tertiary educational institutions has led to some minor improvement in participation rates of disadvantaged groups in tertiary education. However the evidence is not conclusive. But, as pointed out earlier, the participation rates of females has improved.

Even if there has been some improvement in the equality of access provided by this system it cannot be argued that economic or social mobility has been promoted. Although, theoretically the hierarchy of post-secondary educational institutions which is based upon the notion that an educational system can be designed to provide a match between an individual's capacities and inclinations and his intellectual objectives, it can be argued that this hierarchy actually contributes to inequality within the community.

Given both the limited numbers of the Australian population and its concentration in the urban, coastal areas, it appears incredulous in a city of 70-80,000 there can exist all three types of tertiary institutions operating independently. Now that Australia has passed the period where it was forced to be preoccupied with quantitative growth, consideration must be given to the structural relations of tertiary education, and the interrelationship of institutions, particularly in regional areas if access is to be promoted, greater efficiency in the utilization of public resources obtained, and social discrimination through education is to be avoided.

2. The Control of Higher Education Down Under

Under the Australian Constitution the control of education rests with the State Government. However, in recent years, as a result of the constitutional provisions which allow the Commonwealth government to make financial grants to the states on such terms and conditions as it deems appropriate the Commonwealth has been able to control the extent and nature of higher education, particularly since 1974 when it assumed full financial responsibility for funding universities and colleges of advanced education.

The instrument by which this control is exercised is the Tertiary

Education Commission. The states continue to maintain a series of Boards or Commissions, but despite protestations to the contrary, they have little power or responsibility. The extent of the Commonwealth power in relation to colleges and universities is broad:

1. The control of funds - Since 1974 the Commonwealth assumed complete responsibility for the funding of university and advanced education. As there is no income provided by tuition fees, almost the total funding for these institutions is derived from this source. Funds are allocated to individual institutions under a Commonwealth Act. To date, no official basis has been proclaimed as to how such funds have been determined and, since 1977, the Commonwealth has decreed that there will be no increase in real terms in the level of funding provided to such institutions. In fact, there has been a decrease. Associated with the Commonwealth's assuming responsibility for funding, has been increased pressure on the institutions to provide regular (quarterly) detailed, line item, expenditure statements.

2. Control over Capital Works - The Commonwealth must approve and fund all capital works including the purchase of land, the construction and alteration of buildings and the purchase of larger equipment items over $10,000. The procedural requirements necessary to obtain approval are zealously applied by the Commonwealth, particularly in relation to buildings where often lay boards have determined the nature of the materials to be used.

3. Control over Academic Salaries - Academic salaries for given salary classifications are standardized throughout Australia. For example, all professors receive a salary of approximately $A33,000 regardless of the discipline area, their degree of academic recognition, or their market power. Such salaries are determined by a Commonwealth Tribunal. The Commonwealth also indirectly determines conditions of appointment. In May 1978, following a Commonwealth inquiry into study leave in universities and colleges of advanced education, a series of recommendations were presented to the Tertiary Education Commission on the nature and length of study leave available to staff. These recommendations which seriously curtailed study leave privileges were subsequently adopted by the Commonwealth Government and are currently being implemented in all colleges and universities.

4. Control over Courses/Enrolments - The decision to fund new courses in the advanced education sector is made by the Commonwealth, and existing courses are reviewed at regular intervals. While the State Boards assess all new course proposals in advanced education and make recommendations regarding their accreditation, the ultimate implementation of new courses is dependent on funding which, as pointed out earlier, is controlled by the Commonwealth government. Further control over advanced education is exercised by the Commonwealth through its determining annually, in consultation with the

state coordinating authorities, the number of approved (EFT) students for each institution. In addition, the government has directly restricted the number of places available in certain areas - notably teacher education, and engineering. It is presently investigating the offering of external or off-campus studies by institutions where it is also likely to introduce greater measures of control. The same level of control is not exercised over university courses, although universities are restricted in regard to any new academic area in which they may seek to offer courses. The level of funding also has an overriding influence on the courses offered.

5. Control over Student Finance - Since 1974, students entering higher education have not been required to pay tuition fees and have been eligible for Commonwealth, means-tested allowances based upon family income. The size and conditions of these allowances are reviewed annually at the time of the Federal Budget. There is greater control in this area at the state level (see footnote).

6. Control over Graduate Placement - Government agencies are the largest single employer of graduates, as shown by Table 3:[6]

TABLE 3

MAJOR FIELDS OF EMPLOYMENT OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Field of Employment	College %	Universities %
Federal Government	13.1	14.6
State Government	25.0	24.6
Private/Professional Practice	9.9	13.7
Industry & Commerce	23.1	16.0
Teaching (Government Schools)	25.7	29.5
Other	3.2	1.6
	100.0	100.0

Scholarships have been liberally awarded by state government Education Departments to those seeking pre-service teacher education qualifications in preparation for teaching in government schools. Up to 1978, all but a few students enrolled in teacher education undergraduate courses were recipients of scholarships which provided a book allowance as well as living allowance. With the growing surplus of teachers, the number of scholarships was reduced in most states in 1979 and there is talk of them being abandoned completely from 1980. The original purpose of the scholarship was to attract students into the teaching profession during the period of rapid growth following the Second World War.

From this table it can be seen that less than one third of graduates were employed by the private sector. In some occupational areas the public sector is almost the sole employer of graduates. Given the prevailing economic orthodoxy of restricting the rate of growth in employment in the public sector, it will be necessary for the private sector to absorb a greater share of the output of tertiary educational institutions, and this could result in a further greating of the educational use of the students to the narrow requirements prescribed by the labor market.

3. Impacts of Centralized Control

The development of a centrally controlled higher education system may facilitate national planning of higher education. It may ensure that public funds are spent wisely, that there is a balanced and rational development of education, and that undue, wasteful competition between institutions is avoided. However, there are many dysfunctional attributes:

1. Centralized control has a limiting effect on institutional innovation and experimentation in teaching.

2. Centralized control influences the degree to which decisions are made on political rather than educational grounds, particularly in regard to the establishment and location of institutions. There are approximately 250 post secondary institutions in Australia, many with an enrollment of less than 1,000 students. On a per capita basis, Australia has the highest number of post secondary institutions in the world.

3. Centralized control results in a breakdown in communication between the different levels of co-ordination and institutions. The breakdown is aggravated by the conflict of objectives between state and federal ministries and apparent duplication of the roles of the coordinating authorities at the state and federal levels. It might be pointed out that some six state coordinating authorities, three federal councils and one commission are utilized to control the tertiary student population in Australia which is approximately half the population of the California system.

4. The greatest single criticism of the system of control of Australian tertiary education is its erosion of institutional autonomy. The possession of autonomy is, of course, a matter of degree. No institution can act in isolation from other institutions. Also, the demand for accountability of institutions accompanies a growing concern about levels of public spending. The educational commissions are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that funds are spent wisely in accordance with clearly established educational objectives and priorities. Conflict arises, therefore, not over management but over the way in which objectives can be established and achieved. There is conflict between the desire of every institution to grow in status and scope and the determination of commonwealth authorities to direct growth in accordance with

general principles which may have little meaning to individual institutions.

Speaking in the American context, Professor E. Bowring has argued that it is probably natural for most institutions as well as individuals persons to prefer autonomy and independence to any system of co-ordination and control.[7] Much of the resistance to co-ordination may grow out of a common and normal hostility to what is seen as outside control. Most thoughtful and realistic campus administrative officers recognize the absolute necessity for avoiding wasteful duplication and for seeking efficiencies which can be provided by co-operation and complementary activities between related campuses. They recognize that blind and egotistic competition is too expensive a luxury for modern colleges and universities.

A frequent argument against centralized control is the imputation that it may result in institutional uniformity, or denial of a diversity of offerings. But a contrary position may be argued just as strongly. That the preservation and creation of diversity may be promoted by central control. Moyer, however, suggests that it is the absence of coordination and lack of planning that will guarantee diversity.[8] In the long run, possibly the only thing that isolated action guarantees is randomness, which may or may not mean diversity. Indeed, past experience suggests that, left to their own devices, colleges and universities will move towards uniformity, not diversity.

Most observers would recognize similarities in environmental factors, and problems facing higher education in Australia and America. Given the differences in structure and control, and the similarity in the problems facing higher education in the two separate systems, a logical conclusion is that neither structure nor control of education are the

most significant causes of the problems facing higher education. Nor could it be suggested that they provide solutions to the existing problems.

Nevertheless, in times of change, unless individual institutions rationally plan their activities and do not enter into unproductive competition, central control may be expected to increase in both systems.

References

1. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training, Chairman, Prof. Bruce Williams, (Camberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979), p.11.

2. Ibid., p.8.

3. Report of the Committee on Australian Universities, Chairman, Sir Keith Murray, (Canberra: Government Printer, 1957).

4. Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia, Chairman, L. H. Martin, (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1964-5).

5. Australian Universities Commission, Fifth Report of the Australian Universities Commission (Canberra: Government Printer, 1972).

6. Derived from Table 6 in The Graduate Careers Council of Australia, Where Have All The Graduates Gone? (Victoria: The Graduate Careers Council, 1976), pp.8-9.

7. B. Dearing, "Coordination: A View From the Campus" in J.A. Perkins (ed.), Higher Education From Autonomy to Systems, New York, 1972, p.52.

8. Ernest L. Boyer, "Systems of Higher Education", Higher Education: Crisis and Support, International Council for Educational Development, (New York, 1974), p.72.

Appendix 1

Australian Universities Commission: Fifth Report

3.7 Given the overlap between universities and colleges that is bound to occur, the Commission believes that the basic differences should continue to be as follows:

(a) The vocational emphasis is greater in the courses offered by colleges. The colleges do not undertake the broad range of activities offered in all universities by the faculties of arts and science. The professional courses offered by universities are also vocational, but generally they involve a relatively deep study of basic arts and science disciplines.

(b) The academic staffs of universities have a commitment to research, that is to say their academic duties include teaching *and* research, and they are expected to spend a substantial portion of their time on research and scholarship. Although some research activities will occur in colleges, the staffs' commitment is essentially to teaching.

(c) The universities offer higher degrees by research work. The colleges do not offer such degrees. The Commission is firmly of the opinion that they should not do so, except possibly in fields which are not available at universities. Higher degree work requires special skills and facilities on a scale which the universities alone have; in any event attempts by colleges to enter this area would cause expensive duplication. However, graduates of colleges should have ready access to post-graduate studies in universities.

(d) Some colleges offer some courses of a lower level than university courses, in the sense that they are two-year courses or have an entry standard below the completion of full secondary education.

3.8 The Commission believes that the above factors provide a sufficient basis for differentiation between universities and colleges. In addition, the colleges generally have somewhat less demanding entry standards (in terms of formal academic qualifications), they have a greater commitment to part-time or sandwich studies than universities, they have a more direct relationship with the future employers of their graduates, they employ relatively fewer senior staff of the equivalent of professorial rank and they attract students whose interests are more vocational than abstract.[19]

Appendix 2

Australian Universities Commission:
Report on the Proposal . . . for a Fourth University

3.4 While it may be difficult to define universities and colleges in generic terms, it is possible to list typical characteristics which reflect differences in definition and purpose of colleges compared with universities. These characteristics are:

(a) College courses tend to have a more applied emphasis and to be more vocationally oriented;
(b) College students could be expected to have vocational rather than academic or scholarly interests;
(c) Colleges have more flexible entrance requirements;
(d) Colleges have a more direct relationship with industry, commerce and other employing authorities;
(e) Colleges provide greater opportunities for part-time studies;
(f) The academic staffs of universities have a commitment to research in that their academic duties include teaching *and* research and they are expected to spend a substantial portion of their time on research and scholarship. Although some research activities occur in colleges, the staff's commitment is strongly to teaching;
(g) Universities offer higher degrees by research work. Generally, colleges do not offer such degrees, although in some specialised areas some colleges offer masters degrees by this route and by course work;
(h) The commitment of universities to scholarship and research implies that they should have more substantial library facilities and scientific research facilities than colleges;
(i) While the distribution of enrolments as between those in scientifically oriented courses and those in non-scientifically oriented courses is in the aggregate similar in universities and colleges, the colleges do not offer many courses in the humanities;
(j) Although colleges are offering an increasing number of degree courses, a significant commitment of colleges is to three-year diplomas following a full secondary education. In addition, in some disciplines, some colleges offer lower-level two-year diplomas. Some colleges also offer pre-tertiary courses.

Although a particular college may not differ from a particular university in respect of each of the above factors, taken as a whole they enable a broad distinction to be drawn between universities and colleges.[20]